



## The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure L – The Problem of Thor Bridge

The action takes place on a large country estate inhabited by a cruel tyrant from another country. An English governess has charge of the children, there is a secretary named Ferguson, and the household has a connection to Latin America. Could it be “Wisteria Lodge”? Yes it could be, but it’s not. This week’s story is “The Problem of Thor Bridge,” and though it seems to me that Holmes was never in better form, the Master himself was not entirely satisfied with his handling of the case. Whether you agree or disagree, I hope you’ll meet us at the bridge that spans the reed-girt sheet of water for that mixture of imagination and reality which is the basis of our discussions. In a moment, I’ll chip in with a mere couple of comments and questions to start things off.

As good as gold? Was Grace Dunbar as good a person as Neil Gibson described her? Holmes didn’t take the Gold King’s word for it, but once he met her, he seemed to accept Miss Dunbar’s innocence completely. Was she that good, or simply that charming? Do her own words suggest a particularly fine human being, or does she seem a bit overwhelmed by it all?

Why didn’t Gibson divorce his wife?

At the conclusion of the story, Holmes said, “...the financial world may find that Mr. Neil Gibson has learned something in that schoolroom of sorrow where our earthly lessons are taught.” But did Gibson suffer any particular sorrow, once he was able to stop worrying that Miss Dunbar might be hanged? Did he learn anything? Was it likely that Grace Dunbar’s supposedly good influence was a lasting one?

Holmes said, “I do not think in our adventures we have ever come across a stranger example of what perverted love can bring about.” Whose love was perverted? Mrs. Gibson’s for her husband or her husband’s for Grace Dunbar?



Sluggish in mind: Why was Holmes disappointed with his detective skills in this story? His statement seems overly self-critical: "I fear, Watson, that you will not improve any reputation which I may have acquired by adding the case of the Thor Bridge mystery to your annals.... I confess that the chip in the stonework was a sufficient clue to suggest the true solution, and that I blame myself for not having attained it sooner." Was this the true reason for his dissatisfaction, or did he have other reasons to be unhappy with himself at the conclusion of this case?

Watson's introductory paragraph is full of the kind of extra information that Sherlockians hunger for. Of particular interest are the untold cases of James Phillimore, the cutter Alicia, and Isadora Persona and his matchless worm. Is there any significance in the fact that Watson's list includes unfinished and unsuccessful cases?

How big is a tin dispatch box? Is it bigger than a breadbox? My impression has always been that it was slightly smaller than the average breadbox, and therefore not something that would take up a lot of space if someone wanted to keep it around the flat. That being so, why did Watson store his box in the vaults of Cox & Co.?

Until Holmes performed his own experiment with Watson's revolver, there was only one chip on the stone parapet of Thor Bridge. This suggests that Mrs. Gibson never practiced her maneuver with the string and the stone, but trusted everything to work perfectly the first time. Does it make sense that anyone clever enough to think of the arrangement in the first place should have left its actual practice untried?

**Rosemary Michaud**